



12 April 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Perspectives: 1975-1995

1. Attached are notes from [redacted] which mark beginning responses to your urging that we endeavor to peer a little further into the more distant future than the five-year span we currently consider in Perspectives. I am assuming the central part of your concern is that we -- the Intelligence Community -- could come to the realization along about 1985 that some fundamental (and expensive) programmatic and resource decisions of a far-reaching nature had been made, say, in the summer of 1975 which have turned out to be short-sighted and off the mark. And for this reason you would like to come up with some reasonably logical, albeit highly speculative, assumptions as to what the world could look like 20 years from now. (My father used to say: "If my front sight were as good as my hindsight, I wouldn't do the things I do by a damn sight!") Obviously a tough order, and I'm afraid [redacted] have not even dented the problem yet -- let alone penetrate it.

2. This clearly is a problem for the NIO's, and they, too, will need all the help they can get. A possible concept could be for each NIO to take three or four of the major problems/trends/issues in his respective area, add 20 years and simply speculate what these problems/trends/issues could look like at that time. Add a separate paragraph or so on possible technological breakthroughs and one on the universal issues of energy shortage, pollution, and food vs overpopulation, and we probably will have gone as far as we dare. The result may still be something we cannot use, but we will only know after we have tried.

3. May I suggest this as a subject for your upcoming meeting with the NIO's this Monday afternoon?

[redacted]
Samuel V. Wilson
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy to the DCI for the
Intelligence Community

18 March 1975

NOTE TO:
General Wilson

Herewith the initial draft of the longer-
range Perspectives requested by Mr. Colby.
It was prepared by

I do not concur with all of
estimates and, indeed, see no need to in
this sort of paper. In general, I would see
this as more optimistic in tone and less
radical in its specific prognostications than
I would personally sanction, but I think it is
a very good starting point.

We are requesting comments from ICS
section chiefs and the NIOs. We are also
passing a copy informally to

LS/

Chief, PRD/IC

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D R A F T / []

18 March 1975

Perspectives for Intelligence: 1975 - 2000

1. Over the next twenty-five years, the distribution of power and the pattern of relationships among the nations of the world is unlikely, in gross terms, to change significantly. US and Soviet strategic military capabilities will remain in balance and continue to overshadow the military capabilities of any other nation or combination of nations. US relations with Western Europe and Soviet relations with Eastern Europe will be subjected to continuing tensions and adjustments. And relations between the two blocs will become more deeply interwoven and complex, economically and culturally. But in a strategic sense the two blocs will remain internally cohesive, identifiably separate, and in ~~confrontation~~ *competition*.
2. China's nuclear weapons capability will increase substantially during this time frame, as will its industrial base. It will aspire to super-power status but will continue to lag well behind the US and USSR. As a dynamic society undergoing rapid change, China's initiatives on the international scene are likely to be less predictable than those of maturer societies. As it matures and gains confidence from its increasing strength, however, China may well tend to play a less strident and disruptive role than in the past.

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Balkanization rather than bipolar

3. Major changes are likely to occur in the relative power and influence of a number of secondary powers. Iran, Brazil, and Nigeria are strong candidates to play more forceful roles both regionally and internationally. Traditional animosities, as between Greeks and Turks, Indians and Pakistanis, and Arabs and Israelis will persist. And new bilateral confrontations will develop. From all these factors, regional, so-called small, wars are likely to persist and perhaps increase in frequency. ~~Nationalistic~~ considerations will be the primary cause of most of these confrontations; ideology will play a minor role. ✓

4. Instability in the relationships among the smaller powers is ~~unlikely, however, to upset the basic equilibrium of the great powers.~~ The latter will continue to try to exploit regional confrontations in their own national interests. But the risk of small wars escalating into big, nuclear, wars will weigh heavily on the major powers and will be likely to continue to induce discretion on their part. ~~The art of preventing small wars from developing into big wars will, thus,~~ be further developed and refined. The process is likely to ~~be molded into the continuing efforts of the super-powers to agree to the limitation and perhaps even the eventual reduction of armaments.~~

International institutions?

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5. As with political developments, world ~~economic developments~~ over the coming quarter century will be characterized by relative stability among the highly industrialized nations, extraordinary growth in a number of secondary powers, and continued acute ~~poverty and stagnation in most of the Latin American, African, and South Asian nations.~~ *gap grows* International arrangements for the more orderly exchange of capital, raw materials, goods, and services will proliferate and deepen and result in a more complex and shock-resistant interdependence among the world's major trading nations. Serious imbalances and tensions will from time to time strain the international economic fabric, as they have during the past two years. But it is ~~unlikely that anything so traumatic to the world's economic equilibrium as the current energy crisis will soon recur.~~ Assuming a gradual and orderly recovery from this crisis in the next few years, the outlook over the longer term is for the ~~rapid development of a variety of energy sources.~~ Whether with respect to energy, food or raw materials generally, the major industrial powers are likely to devote considerably more effort than in the past to long-term planning and the search for alternative means to meet their essential needs, in order to avoid disruption of the economic process.

6. The foregoing relatively sanguine view of the future is clouded by several major uncertainties. The most serious of these is the playing out of the nuclear-proliferation issue. Israel is strongly suspected of already having nuclear weapons, India has exploded a nuclear device, and Pakistan, Iran, South Africa, Argentina, Taiwan, are either known to be developing a nuclear weapons capability or to have the means to engage in such a program. These and many other nations could, by the year 2000, have nuclear weapons.

7. A straight-line projection of this proliferation trend, however, seems unlikely. While there appears to be little prospect that the ~~five permanent members of the Security Council~~ would ever agree to a total ban on nuclear weapons, it seems equally ~~unlikely~~ that they, together with a substantial number of other nations both great and small which have voluntarily foresworn the nuclear option or which are too poor to acquire one, would ~~allow themselves to be put in the position of vulnerability to nuclear blackmail~~ from a variety of secondary powers. It would seem logical, therefore, that the trend towards proliferation will be accompanied by at least an equally powerful trend to stamp it out. If, in fact, a number of secondary nations acquire nuclear weapons before an international

How will they prevent it?

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ban is agreed to, or in defiance of such a ban, resolution of the problem will be more traumatic and involve high risks to international equilibrium. It will probably involve ~~unilateral action~~ by ~~one or more of the major nuclear powers~~ to eliminate nuclear capabilities of secondary powers. The likelihood of such extreme sanctions would increase if one of these secondary nations employed, or even seriously threatened to employ, a nuclear weapon.

One nuclear war

8. Another major uncertainty, alluded to earlier, is the role to be played by China as its power increases. There will undoubtedly continue to be periods of extreme tension between China and the USSR, and miscalculation by the leaders of either nation could conceivably lead to nuclear war between them. Given the presumed effects of a nuclear exchange on both countries, this would appear an unlikely possibility unless the government of either were in a condition of extreme instability and demoralization.

9. China will also push hard to eliminate the Taiwan issue. But in pursuing this aim it will not seriously risk destroying its "understanding" with the US so long as it feels it needs such an understanding to counterbalance Soviet pressure. As its power and nuclear capability increase, however, it may become progressively less interested in the American connection.

Expansion to SE Asia?

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10. In other international areas, China will encourage the evolution of benign governments on its periphery and ideologically combat the Soviet influence world-wide. It will probably continue to be too preoccupied and engrossed by problems of internal development, however, to project its power aggressively into foreign areas.

11. The possibility of a rapprochement between China and the Soviet Union is obviously of special concern to the US and cannot be discounted. Even if it were to occur, however, it is difficult to conceive of it as a strong and permanent phenomenon. The conflict of cultures and interests of the two nations appears so deep that only a major external threat, common to the both, could presumably override their mutual antagonisms.

✓ 12. A further major threat to great power equilibrium in future years is the possibility of technological breakthroughs, primarily in two areas. One is the development by any nation of a significantly improved weapons system, either offensive or defensive. The other is the development by either the USSR or China (or the US) of techniques to deny to the others the "national means of verification" ✓ of their weapons inventories. The latter would be particularly critical as it would greatly increase the risk of miscalculation in relations between the super-powers.

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13. Technological breakthroughs, phenomena which futurists refer to as "disconnects," are essentially unpredictable. Other examples of "disconnects" are irrational acts by key world leaders and sudden major shifts in a nation's policies as a result of coups or the assassination of key leaders. *CYA; "inaximal act" by this definition could be the use didn't follow -*

14. A final major threat to great power equilibrium in future years will be the possibility of the inadvertent escalation of minor ~~confrontations~~ through a miscalculation of motives, intentions, and capabilities. As noted above, the fear of escalation will inhibit adventurous efforts by the major powers to exploit secondary confrontations. But the latter are likely to increase in frequency, and the machinery developed by the major powers to control their escalation is far from foolproof.

15. The foregoing summary projection of world developments over the coming quarter century suggests some ~~important changes in emphasis for intelligence~~. The ~~nuclear proliferation issue is likely to increase in priority throughout the period--unless, of course, it is eliminated~~. China, also, will almost certainly absorb a progressively greater share of the community's total effort. The ~~USSR, small wars, and crisis situations among secondary powers~~ will probably retain ~~roughly the same priorities they now enjoy~~.

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And ~~economics~~ will probably revert in a few years' time to the position it held before the energy crisis. And, finally, it is to be hoped that the intelligence community will develop a higher sensitivity to the possibility of historical "disconnects" and a willingness to probe more deeply than in the past into the apparently unknowable.

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INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY STAFF

31 March 1975

TO: General Wilson/ []

STAT

Since this task concerning 25-year Perspectives has (wisely) been given to the NIOs, I am making the attached memo available only on a very informal basis and in draft form. I am not at all convinced that a 25-year estimate is desirable, since even 5-year crystal balls are far from spherical. But it may be that those who perform this task and those who review the product will need all the help they can get. This, in any event reflects the spirit in which I offer my 25-year notions.

R []

C/PRD

STAT

Attachment:

Draft/ 25-Year Perspectives

cc: Mr. Carver [] B/DGL/NIO
BC/PRD/IC

1 - PRD Chron

✓ 1 - PRD/Perspectives

1 - RWS

2 - PRD (info) INFORMATION

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DRAFT/20 March 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Some Quick Thoughts on 25-Year Perspectives

STAT 1. [] thought-provoking 25-year estimate has, in fact, provoked some thoughts here. I thought, specifically, that--as a diversion from reviewing items of intelligence which are very much products of the present--I might usefully put my ponderings of the future into print.

2. I stated in a previous note to *Gen. Wilson* ~~that~~ that I found John's effort overly optimistic and insufficiently radical. Let me explain:

John's prognosis is "realistic" in the sense that he projects linearly. He pretty much assumes that trends and circumstances visible today--e. g., US-Soviet "confrontation" (which word, by the way, I find something of a misnomer), US-West European cooperation, etc.--will be visible more or less in the same form in the year 2,000. In those few instances where he foresees important changes, they are for the most part rather optimistic--e. g., the solving of the energy crisis, the ability of the two great powers to dampen down regional wars, etc. Finally, John does not suggest

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the appearance of anything wild or radical on the world scene, other than something which occurs as the consequence of some kind of technological breakthrough (which is, as he says, itself, quite unforeseeable).

3. But if recent history shows anything, it shows that linear projections of this character are not realistic. It is perfectly safe to say, I think, that over the next quarter of a century, there will be some rather fundamental changes and radical departures from the status quo which cannot be predicted linearly, i. e., as straight-line projections of presently perceivable circumstances.

4. To make my point clear, and perhaps convincing, pretend, if you will, that it is now ~~1950~~ 1950, and that you have been asked to peer ahead through the years to 1975. Would you in this year of war in Korea, the heyday of Stalin, etc., and projecting cautiously as has, have foreseen:

--The disruption of the newly established Sino-Soviet alliance, to the point of active competition and confrontation?

--Revolutions (bloody or peaceful) in Hungary and Czechoslovakia?

--US involvement in the war in Vietnam (and its consequences)?

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

--US-Soviet detente and US-Chinese detente?

--MIRVed missiles on nuclear submarines?

--A manned landing on the moon?

--An Arab oil boycott?

--The precipitous decline of the United Kingdom?

--The inability of the great powers to control their allies
or effectively to bring pressure to bear on Third World countries?

--The resignation, under fire, of a US President?

5. Some of the events on this list might have been predicted, but probably not many, at least within the specified period. And not many events of this radical and general character would have been predicted (a task less demanding--to all but astrologers--than the identification of specific events).

6. Which brings me to my principal point. An essay which seeks to peer 25 years into the future cannot do so with specific predictions. It should seek instead only to speculate about possible trends and then use specifics only for illustrative purposes. I would not say for example, that the US-Soviet relationship is likely to remain roughly the same over the next 25 years. Rather, I would discuss trends in relations between the world's major powers and in the global balance of power, perhaps along the following lines:

Just as the old two-power dominance of the world of the 1950's had faded by the 1970's, the ~~present~~ conglomeration of blocs--US, Soviet, Third World, Chinese--is likely to give way or rearrange itself over time, with major consequences for all the principal powers concerned. The US, USSR, China, Western Europe, Japan, and a grouping of some of the larger Third World states may all find themselves involved in shifting patterns of relationships with one another. They ~~might split over one issue~~, rearrange themselves over another, and wander in or out of loose alliances. On economic issues--sure to grow in importance as demands on the Earth's finite resources grow--the US and USSR might find themselves in opposition to, say, Brazil, Indonesia, and Nigeria. On political issues, China and Japan might be arrayed against the US and USSR. And such economic and political realignments could take place even while the US and USSR maintained their military rivalry and competed for world position and power.

It is entirely possible, moreover, that by the year 2,000 certain individual events will have shaken the international system of alliances:

--NATO could dissolve in disarray; the Warsaw Pact too.

--Communist parties could gain control of several West European states; and/or non-Communist parties could run the affairs of several East European states.

--The two Germanies could reunite.

--The US could retreat into a form of isolationism; so too could the USSR.

--Internal developments in the USSR could lead to the ascendancy of a non-Communist government in Moscow.

--One or another powerful state (Japan, Brazil, Germany) could be governed by a militant expansionist, and generally disruptive dictatorship.

--One or another state of the Third World (Israel, Arab States, India, etc.) might go to war against a neighboring state and sooner or later resort to the use of nuclear weapons.

7. This sort of list could of course be greatly expanded and each item could be annotated to provide plausibility, if the authors so desired. Whatever, a principal theme of this sort of approach (in addition to the previously mentioned notation that radical events will happen) will be that the world environment is likely to become ~~more~~ complex, even as the world "shrinks," and that, accordingly, ~~the role of intelligence will become both more arduous and more necessary.~~

8. I hadn't intended to go to such length or to try to write the 25-year Perspectives. But it might be wise, when revising the existing draft, to give the readers a taste of the wilder flavor I have sought to capture here.



Chief, PRD/IC

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Prod. 5/1

IC

Routing Slip

Executive Registry
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TO:

		ACTION	INFO.			ACTION	INFO.
1	DCI			11	LC		
2	DDCI			12	IG		
3	S/MC			13	Compt		
4	DDS&T			14	Asst/DCI		
5	DDI			15	AO/DCI		
6	DD/AS			16	Ex/Sec		
7	DDO			17			
8	D/DCI/IC	✓		18			
9	D/DCI/NIO			19			
10	GC			20			

SUSPENSE

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Remarks:

*I like Dick's
approach — a
few wild ones —*

DCI/DCI

4/84/75